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Message Text

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U.S. DEL NO. 77

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON'S PRESS BACK-GROUNDER IN JERUSALEM AND CAIRO

REF.: CAIRO 7440

1. FOLLOWING ARE UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON'S SEPARATE PRESS BACKGROUNDERS FOR AMERICAN AND ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS IN JERUSALEM MARCH 7. SINCE THE OPENING STATEMENT COVERED IDENTICAL GROUND IN BOTH BACKGROUNDERS, WE ARE INCLUDING THE WHOLE TRAN-SCRIPT ONLY FOR THAT ONE WITH THE ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS IN PARA 3. PARAGRAPH 4 HAS TRANSCRIPT ONLY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM SESSION WITH AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS.

2. I RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT REPEAT THE MESSAGE AS WELL AS REFTEL TO APPROPRIATE NEA AND OTHER POSTS.

3. BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
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ATHERTON, FOR THE ISRAELI PRESS, AT AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER, JERUSALEM, MARCH 7, 1978, 4:45 P.M.:

SHERMAN: SORRY WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO START RIGHT ON TIME, BECAUSE THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S RUNNING ON A VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE. HE'S GOT TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER AT 5:30, SO WE'LL HAVE TO BREAK THIS OFF AT THE LATEST AT

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5:20. THE GROUND RULES WILL BE CALLED BACKGROUND BRIEF-
ING. I'M SURE YOU ALL KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, IT CAN BE
ATTRIBUTED TO U.S. OFFICIALS, AND I THINK THE ASSISTANT
SECRETARY WOULD LIKE TO START WITH A VERY BRIEF
DISCUSSION OF THE WHOLE PROCESS.
ATHERTON: I'M TEMPTED TO START WITH A VERY LONG DISCUS-
SION WHICH WON'T LEAVE ANY TIME FOR QUESTIONS, BUT I'VE
BEEN TOLD BY BOTH THE AMBASSADOR AND GEORGE SHERMAN THAT
I SHOULD KEEP MY INITIAL REMARKS VERY BRIEF AND ALLOW
MAXIMUM TIME FOR QUESTIONS. SO I'LL TRY TO DO THAT.
LET ME JUST MAKE A COUPLE OF POINTS. I THINK WE ARE AT
A GOOD STAGE FOR TAKING STOCK OF WHERE THE DIPLOMATIC
PROCESS IS AND MORE BROADLY WHERE THE PEACE PROCESS IS.
I'M GOING TO BE LEAVING FOR WASHINGTON AT THE END OF THIS
WEEK FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT, AND IT'S A GOOD
POINT TO STOP AND TAKE A BROADER LOOK AT WHERE WE HAVE
COME, WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE HOPE TO GO. I WOULD
ONLY VERY BRIEFLY EMPHASIZE FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, FROM
THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW, WE CONTINUE TO OPERATE FROM THE
CONVICTION THAT THERE IS TODAY THE BEST OPPORTUNITY
THERE HAS BEEN IN 30 YEARS TO MAKE REAL PROGRESS TOWARD
PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE DO NOT INTEND TO MISS THE
OPPORTUNITY IN SO FAR AS WHATEVER THE UNITED STATES CAN
DO TO HELP THIS PROCESS ALONG. I USE THE WORD "PROCESS"
ALL THE TIME, BECAUSE I THINK THERE IS A TENDENCY SOME-
TIMES TO LOOK AT INDIVIDUAL EVENTS AS SELF-CONTAINED AND
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QUITE OBVIOUSLY THAT ISN'T THE CASE. IT'S MORE OF A
PROCESS NOW PERHAPS THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN IN THE SENSE
OF CONTINUITY. BY THAT I MEAN FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW,
BY MY NOMINATION TO THE POSITION OF FULL-TIME AMBASSADOR
AT LARGE FOR MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS--THAT IS A
DEMONSTRATION OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CONTINUITY OF THE
PROCESS. SO THAT BETWEEN THE MEETINGS OF THE SUMMIT
AND THE MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS AND SO FORTH, WE
WILL BE AVAILABLE FULL-TIME THROUGH MYSELF AND MY
COLLEAGUES TO KEEP THE PROCESS GOING WITHOUT INTERRUPTION
AND WITHOUT BREAK. HAVING SAID THAT, LET ME SAY A FEW
WORDS ABOUT THE CURRENT PHASE, WHICH I WOULD DESCRIBE
BASICALLY AS THE PHASE ENDING WITH MY RETURN FOR PRIME
MINISTER BEGIN'S VISIT. I THINK THIS HAS BEEN A VERY
USEFUL ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS THIS LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS.
THE FOCUS OF IT HAS BEEN ON TRYING TO GET AGREEMENT ON A
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. THE VERY TECHNICAL WORK IN
MANY WAYS IS NOT DRAMATIC IN TERMS OF NEWS OR BREAK-
THROUGHS, BUT THE TEXT THAT WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON HAS
BEEN EVOLVING DURING THIS PERIOD. THERE IS QUITE A LOT
OF AGREED LANGUAGE IN THE TEXT. THE DIFFERENCES HAVE
BEEN NARROWED AND I THINK MORE SHARPLY DEFINED, WITH A

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CLEARER SENSE OF EACH SIDE'S PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO
LANGUAGE IN THE DECLARATION. THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE
REMAINS WHAT IT HAS BEEN FROM THE BEGINNING--NOT THE
ONLY DIFFERENCE, THERE ARE DIFFERENCES ON A NUMBER OF
POINTS IN THE DECLARATION--BUT THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE
REMAINS THE LANGUAGE HAVING TO DO WITH THE PALESTINIAN
QUESTION: THE QUESTION OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. THE
POSITIONS OF ISRAEL AND EGYPT ON THIS ARE QUITE CLEAR,
AND I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE TIME TO GO INTO THOSE. BUT
LET ME JUST SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR OWN VIEWS ON THIS.

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WE FEEL THAT THE FORMULATION THAT PRESIDENT CARTER USED
AT ASWAN ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION COULD PROVIDE A
FAIR FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE POSITIONS OF
THE TWO SIDES, FOR A NEGOTIATION OF A SOLUTION OF THE
PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN ALL OF ITS ASPECTS. THE CONCRETE
ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRANSLATING A PRINCIPLE ON THIS QUESTION
INTO SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS, WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED
AMONG THE PARTIES INVOLVED. INCREASINGLY I THINK THERE
IS AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONCEPT WITH REGARD TO THE WEST
BANK AND GAZA--OR AS THE PRIME MINISTER KEEPS REMINDING
ME, I SHOULD SAY JUDEA, SAMARIA AND GAZA--THAT SOME KIND
OF INTERIM SOLUTION, OR INTERIM ARRANGEMENT IS PROBABLY
THE MOST LOGICAL WAY TO APPROACH IT. THAT WOULD LOOK
TOWARDS AN ULTIMATE SETTLEMENT, BUT NOT TRY TO REACH AN
ULTIMATE SETTLEMENT ON THIS VERY, VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE
AT THE PRESENT TIME. I'M SURE THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE

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FOLLOWED THIS QUESTION KNOW THAT THE SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE WHICH CONVENED HERE IN JERUSALEM WAS THE QUESTION OF GUIDELINES FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS RELATING TO WEST BANK AND GAZA ISSUES.
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THE FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA WAS THE DECLARATIONOF PRINCIPLES, AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH NOW. BUT IT FLOWS QUITE NATURALLY--WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT THE PRINCIPLE FOR A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM --IT FLOWS QUITE NATURALLY INTO THIS. DURING MY TALKS THERE HAS BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN SOME PRELIMINARY, EXPLANATORY DISCUSSION, VERY PRELIMINARY AND VERY EXPLORATORY--I DON'T WANT TO IMPLY THAT WE'VE GOTTEN FORMALLY INTO THAT ITEM OF THE AGENDA. IT IS NATURAL, HOWEVER, TO BEGIN AT LEAST TO TALK ABOUT THE KIND OF GUIDELINES THAT MIGHT BECOME ACCEPTABLE TO THE PARTIES FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA LOOKING TOWARDS AN ULTIMATE FINAL SETTLE-MENT.

LET ME SAY JUST A WORD ABOUT OUR VIEWS ON OTHER ELEMENTS, OTHER PRINCIPLES, THAT LOGICALLY BELONG IN THE DECLARA-TION OF PRINCIPLES. CLEARLY THERE HAS TO BE A PRINCIPLE DEALING WITH THE RELATIONSHIPS OF PEACE, AND ON THIS I THINK OUR VIEWS HAVE BEEN CLEARLY STATED. PEACE SHOULD NOT BE JUST THE END OF BELLIGERENCY, BUT NORMAL PEACEFUL RELATIONS WITH THE FINAL AGREEMENTS EMBODIED IN PEACE TREATIES. THERE HAS TO BE OBVIOUSLY A PRINCIPLE DEALING WITH THE WHOLE QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, AND OUR VIEW ON THIS AGAIN HAS BEEN CLEAR. WE'VE SAID MANY TIMES THAT WE FEEL THAT THE RELEVANT LANGUAGE IN RESOLUTION 242 ON WITHDRAWAL APPLIES ON ALL FRONTS OCCUPIED IN THE 1967 WAR; NOT TO ALL THE TERRITORIES ON ALL THE FRONTS, BUT TO ALL FRONTS. AND THERE ALSO OBVIOUSLY HAS TO BE A PRINCIPLE DEALING WITH THE CONCEPT OF SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BOUNDARIES AND THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION THAT THERE HAVE TO BE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AGREED BY BOTH SIDES TO MAKE RECOGNIZED
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BOUNDARIES ALSO SECURE BOUNDARIES. APART FROM THE DECLARATION, BUT STILL OBVIOUSLY AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE NEGOTIATING ATMOSPHERE THESE PAST FEW WEEKS, HAS BEEN THE DISPUTE OVER THE SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. I HAVE NOT, WE HAVE NOT BEEN DEALING WITH

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THAT IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT IT'S QUITE APPARENT THAT IT'S IN THE BACKS OF THE MINDS OF THE NEGOTIATING PARTIES. IT IS VERY MUCH IN THE MINDS OF EGYPT AS WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. IT DOES HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE ATMOSPHERICS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

LET ME JUST SAY A COUPLE OF WORDS ABOUT THE NEXT PHASE, WHICH CLEARLY WILL BEGIN WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S VISIT, AND THE REASONS FOR IT. SOME PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME WHY WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER WAS JUST THERE IN DECEMBER, WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE ANOTHER MEETING SO SOON? I THINK THAT THE ANSWER IS REALLY QUITE CLEAR, THAT WE ARE IN A NEW PHASE OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS NOW SINCE DECEMBER. THERE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THEN. THE PRESIDENT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT SADAT TO BE SURE THAT HE WAS TOTALLY UP TO DATE ON THE VIEWS OF PRESIDENT SADAT, AND ALSO TO MAKE SURE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT FULLY UNDERSTANDS OUR VIEWS ON THE WAY THAT THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, SHOULD GO FORWARD. THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER IS TO SERVE PRECISELY THE SAME PURPOSE, TO UPDATE THE PRESIDENT'S UNDERSTANDING OF ISRAELI POSITIONS, AND TO MAKE SURE THAT U.S. POSITIONS AND VIEWS ARE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD ALSO BY THE PRIME MINISTER. THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF EXCHANGES ABOUT THESE VIEWS IN MY TALKS AND IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT THERE ALSO BE A CHANCE TO AIR THESE FACE TO FACE AT THE TOP. AFTER ALL, IT IS AT THE TOP THAT THE ULTIMATE DECISIONS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE MADE. SO WE

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VERY CLEARLY SEE THIS AS A VERY IMPORTANT STEP, A MAJOR STEP IN THE CONTINUING PEACE PROCESS. IT IS NOT ONE THAT IS GOING TO, IN ITSELF RESOLVE PROBLEMS, BUT ONE IN WHICH, HOPEFULLY, GROUNDWORK CAN BE LAID FOR MOVING TOWARDS A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

FINALLY, LET ME JUST RE-EMPHASIZE WHAT I'VE SAID SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, THAT THERE IS NO U.S. BLUEPRINT FOR A PEACE SETTLEMENT. WE STILL ADHERE TO THE VIEW THAT IN THE END THE RESULTS HAVE TO BE RESULTS THAT ARE NEGOTIATED AND AGREED TO BY THE PARTIES. BUT WE DON'T FEEL OURSELVES AS TOTALLY PASSIVE OBSERVERS IN THIS PROCESS EITHER. THERE ARE CERTAIN PRINCIPLES THAT WE CONSIDER HAVE BEEN WELL ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES AND THAT WE CONSIDER COULD BE A BASIS FOR A JUST SOLUTION.

BRIEFLY, FIRST OF ALL, WE FEEL ALL THE PRINCIPLES OF RESOLUTION 242 HAVE TO UNDERLY A SETTLEMENT AND THAT ALL OF THESE PRINCIPLES ARE APPLICABLE ON ALL FRONTS OF THE CONFLICT. AND SECONDLY, WE FEEL THAT A SETTLEMENT DOES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

HAVE TO INCLUDE A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN ALL OF ITS ASPECTS, INCLUDING THE PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PALESTINIANS IN DETERMINING THEIR OWN FUTURE. THE UNITED STATES HAS ALWAYS SAID AND IT REMAINS TRUE TODAY, THAT WE'RE PREPARED TO PUT FORWARD SUGGESTIONS AND IDEAS OF OUR OWN. IF WE FEEL THAT THE TIME HAS COME, OR THE TIME IS RIPE TO DO SO, IF WE FEEL THAT THIS WOULD MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION TO OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES AND ADVANCING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, THAT REMAINS OUR CONCEPT OF THE ROLE WE CAN PLAY. I SHOULD ADD, IT IS NOT A ROLE WE'RE FORCING ON THE PARTIES; WE'VE BEEN WELCOMED, I THINK, BY BOTH SIDES T REMAIN ENGAGED IN THIS WAY. THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN BOTH SIDES HAVE WELCOMED OUR PUTTING FORWARD OUR IDEAS, EVEN THOUGH THERE'S ALWAYS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TREPIDATION IN ADVANCE AS TO WHAT THOSE MIGHT BE. BUT TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE AGENDA FOR THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE THAT CONVENED IN JERUSALEM. IN THE END IT WAS AN AMERICAN PROPOSAL FOR AN AGENDA THAT RESOLVED A TOTAL DEADLOCK BETWEEN THE ISRAELI PROPOSED AGENDA AND THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSED AGENDA. BOTH SIDES WELCOMMED IT, ACCEPTED IT, WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION, SHALL WE SAY, INCLUDING KEEPING THE AMBASSADOR UP ALL NIGHT ONE NIGHT. BUT IN THE END WE DID PRODUCE AN AGENDA THAT EVERYONE ACCEPTED, AND IT GOT THE COMMITTEE STARTED.

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I CITE THAT AS AN EXAMPLE.

NOW LET ME STOP THERE AND SEE IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS THAT I'VE LEFT UNANSWERED.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK THE TIME HAS COME NOW, WHEN BEGIN WILL BE IN WASHINGTON, TO MAKE YOUR OWN SUGGESTIONS? DO YOU THINK THIS WILL BE THE RIGHT TIME AND THE RIGHT
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PLACE?

ATHERTON: AS I NOW CONCEIVE IT--AND OF COURSE OBVIOUSLY THIS IS THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND I CAN'T TELL YOU IN ADVANCE EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THAT MEETING--A LOT WILL DEPEND ON THE DYNAMICS OF THE MEETINGS. AS NOW CONCEIVED AT LEAST I WOULD SAY THIS IS BASICALLY A MEETING FOR A FRANK AND THOROUGH EXCHANGE AND AIRING OF VIEWS AND POSITIONS, OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TRYING TO DEVELOP DEEP UNDER-STANDING OF WHERE DIFFERENCES ARE AND WAYS THEY MIGHT BE RESOLVED. I DO NOT ENVISAGE AT THIS POINT THAT THIS WOULD GET DOWN TO THE SPECIFICS OF PUTTING FORTH CONCRETE AMERICAN PROPOSALS, BUT THE NATURE OF IDEAS THAT WE HAVE CAN CERTAINLY BE DISCUSSED AND AIRED. AND IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT, I THINK, TO FOCUS ON THE FACT THAT AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT THE PROCESS IS GOING TO GO ON. I EXPECT THAT I WILL BE SENT BACK AT SOME POINT AFTER THAT TO FOLLOW UP ON WHATEVER ISSUES REMAIN. I ASSUME THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ISSUES REMAINING. ONCE THEY ARE SOLVED, I DO NOT ASSUME THERE WON'T BE PROBLEMS, THAT WON'T HAVE TO BE SOLVED.

QUESTION: DO YOU SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE RESUMPTION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE TWO COMMITTEES AFTER THE VISIT OF MR. BEGIN; AND TWO, WHETHER YOU SEE ANY POSSIBILITY FOR A SEPARATION BETWEEN JORDAN AND EGYPT?

ATHERTON: WELL ON THE FIRST QUESTION, BOTH ISRAEL AND EGYPT HAVE SAID THAT THE OBJECTIVE IS TO SEE THESE COMMITTEES RESUME TO DO THEIR WORK. ON THE OTHER HAND AT THE MOMENT, I MUST SAY I DON'T SEE ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR DOING SO. I THINK THERE IS A CERTAIN WAITING TO SEE WHAT COMES OUT OF THE VISIT OF THE PRIME

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MINISTER AND DEFER IN A WAY A DECISION ON RECONVENING
THE COMMITTEES. BUT IT'S ALSO CLEAR THAT THE ULTIMATE
OBJECTIVE, AND I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DIFFERENCE ON
THIS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES, IS ULTIMATELY TO GET BACK
INTO THE DIRECT NEGOTIATING MODE THAT THE COMMITTEES
REPRESENT. NOW AS FAR AS EGYPT AND JORDAN ARE CONCERNED,
I'VE JUST BEEN TO AMMAN, I'VE ALSO HAD SEVERAL ROUNDS
OF TALKS IN CAIRO, AND IT HAS BEEN QUITE CONSISTENTLY
THE EGYPTIAN POSITION THAT THEY ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE
TO ACHIEVING A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AS A BASIS FOR
BROADENING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO BRING IN AT LEAST IN
THE FIRST INSTANCE JORDAN. THEY SEE THIS AS GOING IN
PARALLEL WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON BILATERAL ISSUES. SO I
WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, I THINK, BY SAYING
THAT THIS SEEMS STILL TO BE AN IMPORTANT EGYPTIAN
OBJECTIVE. FROM THE JORDANIAN POINT OF VIEW, I THINK
IT'S CLEAR THAT KING HUSSEIN HAS SAID, WELL, LET'S WAIT
AND SEE WHAT THE RESULT OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS ARE BEFORE
MAKING ANY DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT OUR POSITION WILL BE ON
JOINING THEM.
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QUESTION: HOW DID 242 SUDDENLY BECOME AN ISSUE? PERHAPS
YOU COULD FOCUS ON THAT. AND SECONDLY, MR DAYAN THIS
WEEK IN THE KNESSET GAVE A STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S
POSITION ON 242. DOES THAT SATISFY THE AMERICAN POSI-
TION, AMERICA'S UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT ISRAEL'S POSITION

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SHOULD BE?

ATHERTON: THE ONLY ISSUE THAT'S ARISEN WITH REGARD TO 242 IS WHETHER THE PROVISIONS OF THAT RESOLUTION, THE PRINCIPLES OF THE RESOLUTION, INCLUDING THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL, APPLY SELECTIVELY OR ACROSS THE BOARD. AS YOU KNOW, THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS WHETHER 242 CALLS FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL TERRITORIES, OR FROM SOME OF THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967. BUT AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED INTERPRETATION BY ALL THE SPONSORS OF THE RESOLUTION AT THE TIME, BY ALL THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT WHO ACCEPTED THE RESOLUTION, HAS NEVER QUESTIONED THAT IT APPLIES TO AT LEAST SOME TERRITORIES ON EACH FRONT. QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS IN FACT THE POSITION OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, BASED UPON SOME OF THEIR STATEMENTS--INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PROPOSAL THAT WAS PUT FORWARD, THE SELF-RULE PROPOSAL THAT WAS PUT FORWARD, WHICH REFERS TO ISRAEL'S CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY TO THE WEST BANK. IT MAKES VERY CLEAR THAT THE CLAIM IS THERE, BUT THAT IT WILL BE PUT ASIDE DURING THIS PERIOD. BUT THE ASSERTION OF A CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY IS IN CONTRADICTION TO THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM ANY OF THAT TERRITORY, AND THIS IN TURN HAS RAISED QUESTIONS IN THE ARAB MINDS ABOUT WHETHER THAT INTERPRETATION IS STILL THE ISRAELI INTERPRETATION.
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IT WAS ONE REASON WHY DURING PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT HE FELT VERY STRONGLY THE NEED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT IT APPLIES TO ALL FRONTS OUGHT TO BE RE-EMPHASIZED. AND AS YOU CERTAINLY KNOW, IT WAS IN THE STATEMENT THAT WE ISSUED, THAT WAS A UNILATERAL U.S. STATEMENT, THAT WE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE SADAT VISIT IN WASHINGTON STATING THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS. THAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT PUBLIC DISCUSSION AS I UNDERSTAND IT.

QUESTION: ARE YOU SAYING THAT IT SHOULD BE (GARBLED) PRINCIPLES? IS THERE AN EGYPTIAN DEMAND THAT THIS BE EXPLICIT?

ATHERTON: NO, I'M NOT SAYING THAT, I'M SAYING THAT THIS UNDERLIES WHAT THE PRINCIPLES MEAN. IN OTHER WORDS, WHETHER THERE IS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THIS INTERPRETATION IS IMPORTANT TO THE AGREEMENT OF A PRINCIPLE ON WITHDRAWAL, AND ALSO A PRINCIPLE ON THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION OF THE WEST BANK - GAZA PROBLEM. THAT'S WHERE IT TIES INTO AND AFFECTS THE CURRENT NEGOTIATING

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PROCESS. AS TO MR. DAYAN'S STATEMENT, I THINK IT WAS A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IT DID REFER TO 242 AS HAVING DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS, AND IT WAS CLEAR TO ME IN THE CONTEXT, THAT ONE OF THOSE INTERPRETATIONS AT LEAST BY IMPLICATION WAS THE INTERPRETATION THAT IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY APPLY ON ALL FRONTS.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK THAT ISRAEL IS IN FACT LEGALLY COMMITTED TO THE PRIOR OR PREVIOUS INTERPRETATION OF 242?

ATHERTON: WELL, LEGALLY IS PUTTING IT A BIT STRONGLY. IT WAS CLEARLY OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE POSITION OF

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ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST HAS BEEN THAT THE WITHDRAWAL, THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL, AND I EMPHASIZE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL, APPLIED ON EACH FRONT. I READ AN ARTICLE BY ABBA EBAN, IN THE JERUSALEM POST RECENTLY, WHICH I THINK STATED THAT POSITION IN GREAT DETAIL AND A LOT MORE ELOQUENTLY THAN I CAN. OBVIOUSLY, WE FEEL THAT POSITIONS OF GOVERNMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT, IF ONE IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO HAVE CONTINUITY, SOME COMMON GROUND RULES WHICH REMAIN ACCEPTABLE TO EVERYONE CONCERNED. LEGAL IS PUTTING IT A BIT STRONGLY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT LEGALITY MEANS IN TERMS OF THIS KIND OF A SITUATION, BUT CERTAINLY AS A POLITICAL POSITION, WE FEEL THAT CONTINUITY AND CON-

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SISTENCY IN THIS ARE IMPORTANT.

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR SELF-RULE ISN'T VALID AS FAR AS THE 242 RESOLUTION IS CONCERNED.

ATHERTON: THE PROPOSAL FOR SELF-RULE AS I UNDERSTAND IT, IS A PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE STATUS OF THE GOVERNANCE
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OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD OF TIME, FIVE YEARS, WITH THE PROVISION THAT AT THE END OF THAT TIME IT WILL BE REVIEWED AND MEANWHILE CLAIMS TO SOVEREIGNTY WILL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE. THE ONE ELEMENT THAT RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICABILITY OF 242 IS THE ASSERTION OF THE CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY TO THE WHOLE AREA. I SUPPOSE THAT'S THE PLACE WHERE IT'S HARD TO RECONCILE THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM SOME PART OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WITH THE PRINCIPLE THAT ISRAEL HAS A VALID CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY TO THE WHOLE AREA.

QUESTION: CAN YOU PLEASE BE MORE SPECIFIC AND TELL US WHO AND WHEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF 242 WITH REGARD TO THE WEST BANK? WE KNOW THAT ISRAEL'S PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS A DIFFERENT VIEW WITH REGARD TO THAT, BUT ONE CAN UNDERSTAND ITS POSITION AS IT IS, BUT I DON'T KNOW VERY CLEARLY WHO RAISED THE QUESTION WITH REGARD TO 242?

ATHERTON: IT CAME UP IN PRIVATE DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS BEFORE IT BECAME A PUBLIC ISSUE.

QUESTION: BETWEEN WHOM?

ATHERTON: AND IT CAME UP IN A WAY, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT BROUGHT TO A HEAD, OR AN ATTEMPT MADE TO RESOLVE IT, DURING A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE LAST SUMMER, WHEN HE CAME HERE AND WE DISCUSSED AT THAT TIME WITH PRIME MINISTER AND HIS GOVERNMENT THIS ISSUE. SO AT LEAST IN OUR VIEW WE SAW THIS AS AN AREA IN WHICH THERE WERE POTENTIAL DISAGREEMENTS, BUT THE FOCUS SHIFTED AT THAT TIME TO OTHER ISSUES. IT DIDN'T BECOME AN ISSUE AFFECTING ANY LIVE AND ACTIVE NEGOTIATION UNTIL WE GOT INTO THIS PHASE FOLLOWING THE SADAT INITIATIVE AND THE
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NEED TO TRY TO MAKE CONCRETE PROGRESS ON A DOCUMENT COMING OUT OF THOSE NEGOTIATIONS. AS I SAID EARLIER,

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DURING PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT, WHEN THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS THAT HAD BEEN PUT TO HIM BY THE PRIME MINISTER, BOTH WITH REGARD TO THE SINAI AND WITH REGARD TO SELF-RULE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, HE EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN THAT SELF-RULE COUPLED WITH THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT ON SOVEREIGNTY RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER ISRAEL ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL ON THE WEST BANK. THEREFORE, BECAUSE IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN OUR POSITION THAT IT DID APPLY IN PRINCIPLE, WE AGREED TO PUT THIS INTO OUR STATEMENT AT THE END OF THE SADAT VISIT. I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHERE IT FIRST BECAME A SHARPLY FOCUSED PUBLIC ISSUE TO WHICH THEN THERE WERE REACTIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL. IT'S A PROGRESSION WHICH REALLY BEGAN IN THE PRIVATE DIPLOMATIC TALKS AND, AS ALMOST EVERYTHING THAT EVER HAPPENSIN DIPLOMATIC TALKS, EVENTUALLY IT CAME TO THE SURFACE.

QUESTION: IN THE ISMAILIA SUMMIT, AND IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECLARATION IN ASWAN, AM I RIGHT WHEN I REMEMBER THAT 242 WAS MENTIONED BOTH IN THE ISMAILIA SUMMIT IN THE PROPOSAL THAT WERE DISCUSSED THERE AND IN ASWAN DECLARATION. SO IT MEANS THAT APPARENTLY THIS ARTICLE 242 WAS NOT A SUBJECT OF DISPUTE IN THAT TIME.

ATHERTON: I DON'T KNOW, I'M NOT SURE THAT IT BECAME A SUBJECT OF DISPUTE AT THE ISMAILIA SUMMIT, OR WHETHER IT SIMPLY WAS NOT FOCUSSED ON AS A PROBLEM THEN. PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT AT ASWAN WAS A GENERAL STATEMENT OF REAFFIRMATION OF THE BASING OF PEACE, OF A SETTLEMENT, ON THE PRINCIPLES OF 242, AND IT AGAIN DID NOT FEATURE IN THE SENSE OF EXPLICITLY EMPHASIZING OR UNDERLINING

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THE APPLICABILITY ON ALL FRONTS. THAT CAME OUT OF THE STATEMENT WE ISSUED AT THE END OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT.

QUESTION: WOULD YOU SAY IT'S VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO GET A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES EVER UNLESS THERE'S SOME KIND OF MOVEMENT ON THIS 242 THING?

ATHERTON: WELL, I WOULD SAY THAT THAT IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE PROBLEMS UNDERLYING THE DIFFICULTY OF GETTING AGREEMENT ON THE DECLARATION. YOU'VE GOT TWO LEVELS: YOU'VE GOT THE LANGUAGE OF THE DECLARATION, BUT YOU ALSO HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PARTIES ARE UNDERLYING THAT LANGUAGE. AND THAT FURTHER COMPLICATES THE PROBLEM OF GETTING AGREEMENT ON THE LANGUAGE ITSELF. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS IS THE ONLY PROBLEM WITH GETTING A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. THERE ARE ALSO DIFFERENCES STILL ON HOW YOU QUITE PHRASE THE WITHDRAWAL LANGUAGE. WE'VE BEEN FOCUSING SO FAR IN YOUR QUESTIONS AND MY ANSWERS PERHAPS
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ON THE ISSUES WHICH ARE DIFFICULT ISSUES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ON THIS DECLARATION. THE EGYPTIAN POSITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT THE WITHDRAWAL IN 242 MEANS TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL THE TERRITORIES. IT ALSO GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IS NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO SAY TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL THE TERRITORIES AND HAVE THE AGREEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, OR THE SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES, BECAUSE WE HAVE NEVER ENDORSED THAT LITERAL, RIGID INTERPRETATION OF 242. SO THERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THERE'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE A HARD DECISION MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF EGYPT. --IF YOU WERE JUST TRYING TO PRODUCE WORDS IT WOULDN'T BE SO HARD. BUT THESE WORDS REFLECT VERY SUBSTANTIVE UNDERLYING POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES, AND IN A WAY COMING TO THE DCLARATION IS PART OF THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION. WE ARE NOT LOOKING AT OR LOOKING FORWARD TO--WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION AND TRYING TO GET ACCOMMODATION ON SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE LONG HELD. THAT'S WHY THIS EXERCISE IS BOTH IMPORTANT AND DIFFICULT AND WHY IT SOMETIMES SEEMS TO BE GOING RATHER SLOWLY.

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PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME IF I AM DISAPPOINTED THAT MORE
PROGRESS HASN'T BEEN MADE AND I'VE BEEN SAYING THAT WE'RE
ABOUT WHERE I EXPECTED TO BE AT THIS STAGE.
WE HAVE NARROWED THE DIFFERENCES IN SOME RESPECTS.

QUESTION: WHERE HAVE YOU NARROWED THEM?

ATHERTON: WELL, I DON'T KNOW, FRANKLY....I REALLY DON'T
WANT TO GET INTO THE SPECIFICS OF THAT. TAKE MY WORD FOR
IT, THERE IS ONE CLAUSE THAT IS TOTALLY AGREED, THERE ARE
OTHER CLAUSES WHERE THE DIFFERENCES ARE VERY NARROW
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INDEED, AND WHERE IF YOU COULD SOLVE THE BIG ONES, I
THINK THE OTHERS WOULD FALL INTO PLACE. WE'VE MORE
SHARPLY DEFINED THE DIFFERENCES AND GOTTEN SOME BETTER
IDEA OF WHERE THE PRIORITIES ARE, AND AT THE SAME TIME,
I THINK, AS I SAID EARLIER, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE AGREED
LANGUAGE AT THIS POINT. THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IS THE
ONE ON WHICH THE DIFFERENCES ARE THE BROADEST.

QUESTION: ...ON WORDS. REFLECTIONS ON WORDS...WHAT
STANDS ACTUALLY BEHIND "ALL ITS ASPECTS" REGARDING THE
PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND LEGITIMATE RIGHTS WHICH APPEARS
IN THE ASWAN FORMULA?

ATHERTON: WELL, THESE ARE WORDS WHICH WE HAVE USED, AND
I CAN TELL YOU WHAT THEY MEAN TO US. "ALL ASPECTS,"
HAS ALWAYS MEANT TO US THAT THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IS
BOTH A TERRITORIAL AND A REFUGEE PROBLEM AND IT
HAS TO ENCOMPASS BOTH OF THESE ASPECTS. "LEGITIMATE
RIGHTS," IS A PHRASE WE'VE USED IN THE SOVIET-AMERICAN
COMMUNIQUE WHICH I GATHER IS QUITE A PROBLEM. IT ALWAYS
MEANT DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. THERE'S
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. BUT LET ME TELL YOU WHAT IT MEANT
TO US. IT MEANT THAT THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE
PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE DISTINGUISHED FROM WHAT MIGHT
BE CALLED ILLEGITIMATE CLAIMS. THE PHRASE, "RIGHTS OF
THE PALESTINIANS," HISTORICALLY GIVEN THE EARLIER POSI-
TIONS OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS, ALWAYS HAD AN AMBIGUITY TO IT.
IT WAS OFTEN INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT PALESTINIAN RIGHTS
COULD ONLY BE REALIZED AT THE EXPENSE OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT
TO EXIST. WE'VE USED "LEGITIMATE" QUITE EXPLICITLY, THAT
THAT IS NOT A LEGITIMATE RIGHT - THAT IT IS NOT
LEGITIMATE TO CLAIM THAT WHATEVER PALESTINIAN RIGHTS
THERE ARE CAN ONLY BE REALIZED AT THE EXPENSE OF ISRAEL'S
SOVEREIGN EXISTENCE. AND THAT'S WHAT IT'S MEANT TO US:

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WE'VE SEEN IT AS A POSITIVE PHRASE.

QUESTION: NOT HOMELAND OR ENTITY NECESSARILY?

ATHERTON: WELL, OUR VIEW ON THAT, WE'VE ALWAYS SAID WE THINK THAT THERE SHOULD BE IN THE FINAL SETTLEMENT AN ENTITY OR PLACE THAT WILL BE CONSIDERED A HOMELAND BY THE PALESTINIANS. WE'VE SAID THAT IN THE END WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF LEGITIMATE RIGHTS HAS TO BE PART OF THE NEGOTIATIONS: WHAT IT MEANS HAS TO BE DEFINED BY THE PARTIES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.

QUESTION: YOU HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THE CONTINUATION OF THE PEACE INITIATIVE. CONTINUATION OF THE MOMENTUM OF THE PEACE INITIATIVE. RECENTLY, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU'VE GIVEN SOME MORE SLACK, SAYING CONTINUITY, IN TERMS OF CONTINUITY. AM I RIGHT IN CONCLUDING THAT THERE'S A CHANGE IN PACE INITIATED BY EITHER THREE SIDES . OR ONE OF THE SIDES, THE PARTIES.
ATERTON: WELL, THERE WAS CLEARLY A CHANGE OF PACE AFTER
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TWO DAYS OF THE MEETINGS IN JERUSALEM. OUR CONCERN WAS THAT WHAT HAD BEEN STARTED NOT COME TO A TOTAL HALT. ONE OF THE RESULTS I THINK OF THE SADAT VISIT, IF YOU

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READ THE COMMUNIQUE OR THE STATEMENT WE ISSUED VERY CAREFULLY AT THE END OF THAT VISIT, IT SAID THAT PRESIDENT SADAT CONFIRMED HIS COMMITMENT TO THE CONTINUITY OF THE PROCESS AND THE NEED FOR PERSEVERANCE. VERY IMPORTANT. I WOULD AGREE WITH YOU THAT THE FRENETIC PACE OF THE WEEKS RIGHT AFTER THE JERUSALEM VISIT AND ISMAILIA, AND THE RATHER FRENETIC AND PERHAPS OVER-BLOWN EXPECTATIONS HAVE SLOWED DOWN. I DON'T THINK THIS IS UNNATURAL FRANKLY, I DON'T WANT TO SAY THERE'S SLACK. I WANT TO SAY WE'VE PERHAPS COME TO A MORE MEASURED PACE IN WHICH PEOPLE HAVE MORE TIME TO COME TO GRIPS WITH AND TRY TO RESOLVE IN THEIR OWN POLITICAL PROCESSES AND IN THE NEGOTIATIONS SOME OF THE VERY TOUGH ISSUES. BUT CONTINUITY IS A VERY KEY WORD HERE IT SEEMS TO ME, AND MAYBE IT'S A GOOD NOTE ON WHICH TO END.
QUESTION: THANK YOU. END TEXT.

4. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM BACKGROUNDER WITH AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS AT AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL, JERUSALEM:
BEGIN TEXT: QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, DO YOU FEEL THAT THE CONTINUITY OF THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS IS IN DANGER, CONSIDERING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S STAND THAT 242 DOES NOT APPLY TO ALL FRONTS?
ATHERTON: NO, I DON'T THINK CONTINUITY IS IN DANGER. I THINK THAT THIS IS AN ISSUE OBVIOUSLY, AND ONE THAT IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE FACED UP TO AND DEALT WITH--BUT IT'S JUST THAT. THERE ARE ALWAYS ISSUES; IF THERE WERE NO ISSUES LEFT THE PROBLEM WOULD BE SOLVED. BUT I DON'T SEE ANY INDICATION OF ANYONE SAYING, WELL, THIS IS AN
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ABSOLUTE OBSTACLE AT THIS POINT, AND BECAUSE OF THIS WE CAN'T MOVE ANY FURTHER. WE ARE GOING TO TALK THIS OUT AND TRY TO FIND A WAY OF DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE, AS WELL WITH OTHER ISSUES AS THEY COME ALONG.

QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, YOU SAID THAT WHEN THE UNITED STATES FEELS THE TIME IS RIGHT TO BREAK AN IMPASSE, THAT AMERICA WILL PUT FORWARD IDEAS. DO YOU FEEL THAT WE ARE FAST APPROACHING THAT POINT?
ATHERTON: LET ME SAY WE CERTAINLY HAVE NOT REACHED THAT POINT. AT THIS STAGE WITH REGARD TO THE DECLARA-TION I HAVE BEEN GETTING SUGGESTIONS FROM ONE SIDE, BRINGING THE OTHER, EXPLAINING THE RATIONALE BEHIND THEM AND TAKING BACK REACTIONS AND COUNTER PROPOSALS. WE HAVE NT REACHED THAT POINT, AND I WOULDN'T WANT TO PREDICT NOW WHETHER OR NOT, OR WHEN THAT POINT MIGHT BE REACHED. I THINK IT'S PREMATURE REALLY TO TRY TO MAKE THAT KIND OF A JUDGEMENT.

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QUESTION: YOU SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN A NARROWING OF
THE GAP ON THE SETTLEMENTS QUESTION DURING YOUR PRESENT
SHUTTLE, DO YOU MEAN BY THIS THAT ISRAEL'S AGREEMENT TO
PUT A FREEZE ON THE OPENING OF NEW SETTLEMENTS WHILE
THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT ARE GOING ON?

ATHERTON: NO, PERHAPS I DID NOT MAKE MYSELF CLEAR
ENOUGH, I DID NOT REFER TO A NARROWING OF A GAP ON THE
SETTLEMENTS QUESTION. WHAT I MEANT WAS A NARROWING OF
THE GAP OF THE DIFFERENCES WITH RESPECT TO THE LANGUAGE
OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IN SOME RESPECT.
QUESTION: WAS THERE ANY SPECIAL AREA IN WHICH THE GAP WAS
NARROWED?

ATHERTON: THERE ARE ONE OR TWO AREAS. I AM A LITTLE

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RELUCTANT, FRANKLY, TO GET INTO THE SPECIFICS OF THE
DECLARATION BECAUSE IF I START DOWN THE ROAD IT'S VERY
HARD TO KEEP THE CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.
AT THE STAGE THAT THEY ARE AT, I THINK YOU'LL JUST HAVE
TO TAKE MY JUDGEMENT--IF YOU COUNT THE NUMBER OF WORDS
IN THE DRAFT, THERE ARE PROBABLY MORE AGREED WORDS AND
FEWER DISAGREED WORDS NOW THAN THERE WERE WHEN I STARTED.
THAT DOESN'T HELP YOU A GREAT DEAL BUT I REALLY WOULD
RATHER NOT TRY TO GET INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS AT THIS
POINT.

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QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, YOU SAID YOU HADN'T YET REACHED A STAGE OF AN IMPASS SO DES THAT MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT CONSIDERING NOW PUTTING FORWARD, AS YOU SAID, AMERICAN IDEAS?

ATHERTON: YES, WE HAVE NOT MADE ANY DECISION TO PUT FORWARD AMERICAN IDEAS IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC PHRASING OR IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC TIMING. THE PRINCIPLE, THAT AT SOME POINT WE MAY DECIDE TO DO THIS, WE HAVE ALWAYS
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STATED--AND THAT'S STILL REALLY WHERE IT IS.

QUESTION: WOULD THAT POINT CONCEIVABLY BE DURING THE VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TO WASHINGTON?

ATHERTON: I WOULDN'T EXPECT THAT. I THINK THIS IS GO-ING TO BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE KIND OF THOROUGH EX-CHANGE OF PERCEPTIONS, OF ATTITUDES, OF VIEWS, AS A GROUNDWORK FOR THE FOLLOW-ON DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AFTER-WARDS.

QUESTION: AND THAT WOULD BE ANOTHER PEACE SHUTTLE?

ATHERTON: I WOULD EXPECT THAT IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF THINGS YOU'LL BE SEEING ME BACK HERE AGAIN, AND AT SOME POINT AFTER THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER--I DON'T KNOW QUITE HOW SOON THEREAFTER. THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS WE'LL HAVE TO SORT OF DECIDE IN THE LIGHT OF THE VISIT.

QUESTION: IS THERE ANY PRESENT INDICATION THAT THE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FORMS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND OR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, OR ANY OTHER DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE RESUMED WITHIN THE FORE-PARTY TO THE CONFLICT OR THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THEY HAVE A VERY REAL INTEREST IN THEIR SUCCEEDING AND THEY CAN HELP IN THEIR OWN RELATIONS BEHIND THE SCENES. OBVIOUSLY, IN WAYS THAT IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN HELPFUL, AND I HOPE THAT WILL BE HELPFUL IN THE FUTURE...
QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, DO YOU THINK THAT THE ISRAELI CABINET BY ITS RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS, AND ITS INTER-PRETATION OF 242 NOT NECESSARILY HAVING TO APPLY TO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, DO YOU INTERPRET THIS AS A HARDENING
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OF THE ISRAELI STAND?

ATHERTON: WELL, I WOULD LIKE TO AVOID TRYING TO CHARACTERIZE THIS POINT. WE ARE GOING TO BE MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER; THE PRESIDENT IS GOING TO BE MEETING HIM NEXT WEEK AND OBVIOUSLY THIS INITIATIVE IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED. I THINK THERE IS NO SECRET THAT THE DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS ON THIS QUESTION ARE COMPLICATING FACTORS IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND AS QUICKLY AS ONE LOOKS AT THE QUESTION OF THE WEST BANK, GAZA, PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE IN THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. AS ONE LOOKS AT THE QUESTION A LITTLE FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD, THE QUESTION OF FUTURE INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS AREA, WHETHER OR NOT THE PRINCIPLES OF 242 APPLY TO THE WEST BANK, BECOMES AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE MINDS OF THE ARABS. SO IT REALLY IS A PROBLEM THAT TRULY HAS TO BE DISCUSSED, BUT I WOULD RATHER NOT CHARACTERIZE IT IN TERMS OF HARDENING OR SOFTENING.

QUESTION: JUST A FOLLOW ON FOR A MOMENT PLEASE. BUT AT THE SAME POINT YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE ALREADY BEGUN EXPLORING PRELIMINARY EXPLORATIONS CONCERNING THE SETTLE-MENTS. INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, SOMETHING DOESN'T FIT THERE?

ATHERTON: NO, I THINK ONE CAN BEGIN TO EXPLORE THE ISSUES OF THE PROBLEM. BUT AS SOON AS ONE BEGINS TO EXPLORE, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE PRINCIPLES OF 242 APPLY LOOMS VERY LARGE RIGHT AWAY.

QUESTION: THEN IT'S A ONE-SIDED EXPLORATION--IT'S AN AMERICAN EXPLORATION?

ATHERTON: WELL, WE HAVE CERTAINLY ENCOURAGED THIS.

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WE FEEL THAT IT'S IMPORTANT TO BEGIN TO GET INTO THIS QUESTION OF OUR VIEW OF HOW THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS CAN PROCEED. THIS IS AN AREA WHICH CANNOT SIMPLY BE PUT ASIDE. THERE IS A TWO-PRONGED NEGOTIATION WHICH WAS SEEABLE FUTURE?

ATHERTON: I DON'T THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO SAY AT THIS POINT THAT THAT IS PREDICTABLE. I WOULD HAVE TO ADD THAT I THINK BOTH SIDES ARE AGREED THAT THEY SHOULD RECONVENE AND RESUME THE DIRECT CONTACT AT SOME POINT. BUT THERE IS NO PRESENT PROPOSAL, NO CONCRETE PROPOSAL, ON THE TABLE FOR DOING THAT, AND I THINK IT'S VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO SAY AT THIS POINT WHEN THAT POINT MIGHT BE REACHED.

QUESTION: COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN AMMAN AND CAIRO, THAT FORCED YOU TO ELIMINATE RIYADH. I MEAN, IN MY HUMBLE VIEW IT CAN'T JUST BE THAT SOME PRINCES WERE NOT AVAILABLE?

ATHERTON: BELIEVE IT OR NOT. THE PROBLEM REALLY HAS
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BEEN ONE OF TRYING TO WORK OUT MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIMES FOR ME TO SEE THE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER. IT ISN'T JUST ANY PRINCES; THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS THE PERSON THAT I PARTICULARLY WANTED TO SEE. I WAS TOLD THAT I WAS WELCOME TO COME TO SAUDI ARABIA AND I WOULD BE RECEIVED IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, BUT THE PRINCE SAUD HAS BEEN IN EUROPE. WHILE THEY THOUGHT HE WOULD BE BACK IN TIME FOR THE DATE THAT I HAD PLANNED TO BE THERE, IT DEVELOPED THAT HE WASN'T. BUT LET ME ADD THAT I AM NOW WORKING OUT ARRANGEMENTS SO THAT I THINK IT IS GOING TO BE POSSIBLE TO SEE HIM IN EUROPE ON MY WAY BACK, AND ACCOMPLISH THE SAME PURPOSE THAT I WOULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED HAD I BEEN TO SAUDI ARABIA.

QUESTION: BY THE WAY WHAT IS THAT PURPOSE?

ATHERTON: WELL, IT'S PART OF...WE'VE ALWAYS KEPT THE SAUDI'S INFORMED OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE PEACE EFFORTS. THEY ARE INTERESTED. THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE AN IMPORTANT

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STAKE THEMSELVES ARE ARE INTERESTED IN PEACE IN THE AREA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS. THEY HAVE BEEN BASICALLY SUPPORTIVE OF OUR EFFORTS OVER THE YEARS. THEY ARE NOT TAKING A VERY FORWARD PUBLIC POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE CURRENT PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND WITH REGARD TO THE SADAT INITIATIVE. WE ARE CLEARLY CONTINUING QUIETLY TO KEEP THE SAUDIS AS FULLY ABREAST AS POSSIBLE TO MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS WE ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH, TO CORRECT ANY MISIMPRESSIONS THAT THEY MAY HAVE ABOUT WHERE THINGS ARE GOING OR WHAT THE DIFFICULTIES ARE. IT IS PART OF THE GENERAL DIPLOMATIC BACKDROP FOR WHICH THERE IS A LONG ESTABLISHED PATTERN WITH REGARD TO THE SETTLEMENTS. THEY ARE NOT A ESTABLISHED WHEN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND THE MILITARY
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COMMITTEE WERE THERE: THE MILITARY COMMITTEE CLEARLY DEALING WITH THE BASICALLY BILATERAL ISSUES BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE WITH PRINCIPLES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. PRESIDENT SADAT HAS MADE IT VERY CLEAR FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE PROGRESS IN BOTH OF THESE AREAS. THE NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE IS ISSUES RELATING TO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. IT'S THERE, AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, QUESTIONS ARISE ABOUT WHAT COMES NEXT. SO YOU ARE IPSO FACTO IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS ISSUE.

QUESTION: HAS PRIME MINISTER BEGIN SAID FLATLY THAT HE DOES NOT ACCEPT 242 ON THE WEST BANK OR HAS HE MERELY BROUGHT IT UP AS A QUESTION THAT SHOULD BE NEGOTIATED LATER ON?

ATHERTON: WELL I WOULD RATHER REFER YOU TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS ON THIS, INCLUDING THE ONE MR. DAYAN MADE IN THE KNESSET YESTERDAY, RATHER THAN TRY TO PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH.

QUESTION: MR ATHERTON, A LOT IS BEING WRITTEN OF WHEN BEGIN SEES MR. CARTER NEXT WEEK, THAT HE WILL HEAR TOUGH TALK FROM MR. CARTER, HE WILL BE URGED TO BE FLEXIBLE, AND HE WILL TAKE PRESSURE. HOW ACCURATE IS THIS?

ATHERTON: I THINK ALL THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN IN A VERY OPEN, CANDID, FRANK WAY. I EXPECT THAT WHERE THERE ARE DIFFERENCES THEY WILL BE FULLY AIRED AND DISCUSSED. WHERE THERE ARE AGREEMENTS THEY WILL ALSO BE DISCUSSED AND RECONFIRMED. I DON'T THINK IT'S USEFUL TO TRY TO CHARACTERIZE THE TALKS BEYOND THAT BEFORE THEY HAVE EVEN TAKEN PLACE.

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QUESTION: BUT THAT'S YOUR MORE OFFICIAL WAY OF ANSWER-
ING - IN A BACKGROUND WAY WOULD YOU SAY THAT THERE WOULD
BE PRESSURE OR...

ATHERTON: I THINK AS A DIPLOMAT I AM ALLERGIC TO THE
WORD PRESSURE. I THINK IT CONJURES UP IMAGES OF ACTIONS
AND THINGS THAT TEND TO OVER-SIMPLIFY THE POLITICAL
PROCESSES AS THE NEGOTIATING PROCESSES EVOLVE. WHENEVER
HARD CHOICES ARE FACED IN A NEGOTIATION--AND THIS
APPLIES TO ALL PARTIES, AND NOT JUST TO ONE PARTY--THAT
IN ITSELF CREATES PRESSURES FOR DECISIONS. THESE ARE
REFLECTED IN TURN IN POLITICAL DEBATES OF THE KIND ONE
SEES GOING ON HERE NOW, OF THE KIND OF INTERNAL POLITICAL
DEBATE ONE ALSO SEES GOING ON IN THE ARAB WORLD AS CER-
TAIN ARAB COUNTRIES MAKE DECISIONS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.
AND THE REAL PRESSURE IS IN THE NEGOTIATION TO MAKE
DECISIONS AND TO CHANGE POSITIONS. THIS COMES OUT OF THE
REALITY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES AND THE DYNAMICS
AND NEED TO MAKE CHOICES BETWEEN HARD ALTERNATIVES. I

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WOULD LIKE TO DESCRIBE IT MUCH MORE IN THOSE TERMS THAN IN WHAT IS NORMALLY THOUGHT ABOUT WHEN PEOPLE USE THE WORD PRESSURES IN THIS SITUATION.

QUESTION: IS MR. SADAT INTERESTED IN GETTING THE JORDANIANS INVOLVED? HOW MUCH IS HE ASKING YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THAT PROCESS, AND HOW FAR AWAY ARE THE JORDANIANS IN ANY ACTIVE ROLE?

ATHERTON: WELL, SADAT HAS I THINK MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE ATTACHES IMPORTANCE TO JORDAN'S JOINING THE NEGOTIATIONS --TO A GENERAL BROADENING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS--BUT AT LEAST IN THE FIRST INSTANCE TO JORDAN'S JOINING. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE ALSO RECOGNIZES THAT THIS IS A DECISION THAT KING HUSSEIN IS GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IN THE LIGHT OF HIS JUDGMENT OF HIS OWN INTERESTS. THE JORDANIANS HAVE, I THINK, MADE VERY CLEAR THAT THEY WISH WELL TO THE SADAT INITIATIVE. THEY HAVE NOT JOINED THOSE ARAB GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE COME OUT IN OPEN CRITICISM AND OPPOSITION. SO FAR AS THEIR OWN DECISIONS GO, THEY CLEARLY ARE WAITING TO SEE WHAT COMES OUT OF THIS CURRENT PHASE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DECLARATIONS OF PRIN-CIPLES. I DON'T THINK ONE CAN GO BEYOND THAT AT THIS POINT IN SAYING WHAT ALL THE DECISIONS WILL BE ON THE PART OF JORDAN. BUT THEY CLEARLY ARE WATCHING THE NEGOTIATIONS CAREFULLY, ARE HOPEFUL THAT THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, AND EGYPT CLEARLY HAS AN INTEREST IN SEEING THE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS BROADENED TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE.

QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, YOUR PEACE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED IN THE PRESS LOCALLY AS DEADLOCKED, OR PARTIALLY DEADLOCKED, OR IN A VERY NEGATIVE WAY. WHAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS YOUR PERSONAL EVALUATION OF YOUR SUCCESS? ARE YOU SATISFIED? AND SECONDLY, DO YOU THINK THAT THE RECENT EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN SADAT AND BEGIN HAS INJECTED SOME SORT OF NEW HOPE, OR IS IT JUST A SURFACE WAY OF SATISFYING PUBLIC REALTIONS?

ATHERTON: SO FAR AS MY EFFORTS IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS ARE CONCERNED, I WOULD SAY THAT I'M ABOUT WHERE I THOUGHT I WOULD BE AT THIS STAGE. THERE IS A LOT OF WORK YET TO DO, AND A LONG WAY TO GO, AND THE WHOLE NEGOTIATING EFFORT ISN'T JUST WRAPPED UP IN MY PARTY. THERE ARE ALL THOSE OTHER LEVELS OF TALKS THAT I MENTIONED EARLIER WHICH PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED. WELL I'M NOT GOING TO TRY TO CHARACTERIZE THE LETTERS OBVIOUSLY UNTIL EITHER OF

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THE GOVERNMENTS HAVE DONE SO. THESE ARE PRIVATE LETTERS BETWEEN HEADS OF STATE. BUT THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN EXCHANGE, I THINK, IS ITSELF A GOOD THING IN TERMS OF OPENING UP, OF BEGINNING TO REESTABLISH, THE PERSONAL DIALOGUE AND THE PERSONAL CONTACTS WHICH BEGAN WITH SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

QUESTION: YOU MENTIONED A WELL-ESTABLISHED AMERICAN PRINCIPLE THAT A SOLUTION HAS TO INVOLVE SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN ALL ITS ASPECTS. I WANTED TO ASK PARTICULARLY WHAT YOU UNDERSTOOD BY THAT WORDING --IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, THAT INCLUDE THE PALESTINIANS WHO ARE NOT IN SITU AS THE ISRAELIS SAY?

ATHERTON: TO US IT MEANS BOTH THE REFUGEE ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM AND THE PROBLEM OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WHERE PALESTINIAN ARABSRESIDE--N OUR PARLANCE, THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, IN ISRAELI PARLANCE, JUDEA, SUMARIA AND THE GAZA DISTRICT. SO IT ENCOMPASSES BOTH OF THESE

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DIMENSIONS FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.

QUESTION: YOU SAID THE BEGIN VISIT WOULD GIVE THE UNITED STATES, AFFORD THE UNITED STATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE PRIME MINISTER WHAT THE U.S. BELIEVES IS NEEDED TO GET THE NEGOTIATIONS OFF DEAD CENTER. WHAT IS NEEDED?

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ATHERTON: WELL WE HAVE TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE AND THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND I THINK WE HAVE TO TRY TO COME TO SOME PERMANENT INTERPRETATION OF THE APPLICABILITY OF RESOLUTION 242.

QUESTION: IN THAT ORDER?

ATHERTON: WELL, I DON'T WANT TO GIVE PRIORITIES. I THINK THEY ARE BOTH OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE.

QUESTION: SIR, YOU SAID THAT YOU HAD AN OPEN INVITATION TO SAUDI ARABIA, BUT WHAT ABOUT DAMASCUS? THERE IS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS MADE KNOWN TO YOU OR TO THE UNITED STATES, THAT YOUR PRESENCE IN SYRIA AT THIS TIME WOULD NOT BE WELCOME?

ATHERTON: THERE WAS A FAIRLY AUTHORITATIVE PIECE IN ONE OF THE SYRIAN PAPERS THAT SAID JUST THAT. I DID HAVE SOME DISCUSSIONS WITH, OR EXCHANGES WITH--COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS, OFFERING TO GO TO DAMASCUS TO KEEP OPEN ALSO THE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ON OUR PEACE EFFORTS. THERE IS THAT ARTICLE IN THE TISHRIN; I THINK IT SAID THEY TOOK THE POSITION THAT MY PRESENCE IN THE AREA HAS TO DO WITH THIS NEGOTIATION BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, IT IS CONNECTED WITH THE SADAT INITIATIVE, THEY HAVE MADE NO SECRET OF THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE SADAT INITIATIVE, AND, THEREFORE, THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO HAVE ME COME IN MY PRESENT CAPACITY. SO YOU CAN TAKE IT AS AUTHORTITATIVE WHAT WAS IN THE SYRIAN ARTICLE ON THAT SUBJECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE HAVE A BREAKDOWN IN THE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA. WE STILL HAVE AN AMBASSADOR THERE, HE HAS ACCESS IN THE NORMAL DIPLOMCATIC CHANNELS. WE CONTINUE OUR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON BOTH REGIONAL AND ON BILATERAL MATTERS.

QUESTION: DURING THE TIME OF THIS NEGOTIATING PROCESS, HAS THERE BEEN ANY INDICATION THAT JORDAN HAS IN ANY WAY MODIFIED ITS ORIGINAL PREREQUISITES FOR ENTERING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS? SECONDLY, DO THE ISRAELIS SHARE THE AMERICAN PERCEPTION OF THE HELPFULNESS OF THE SAUDIS?

ATHERTON: I WOULD HAVE TO SAY ON THE JORDANIAN POSI-

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TION THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS OF A CHANGE IN THE FORMAL POSITION OF PREREQUISITIES. BUT I WOULD ADD THAT KING HUSSEIN MADE IT CLEAR HE IS GOING TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT COMES OUT OF THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS, AND NOT MAKE EITHER A COMMITMENT NOW TO COME IN OR NOT TO LATER. ON THE SAUDI ROLE, I THINK, I SUPPOSE THERE ARE VARIOUS ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS, I SUPPOSE, ON THE SAUDI POSITION, AND ON ITS IMPORTANCE OR LACK OF IT. I THINK IN GENERAL WE'VE ALWAYS FOUND SOME UNDERSTANDING HERE, THAT IT'S USEFUL FOR THE UNITED STATES TO HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS WITH THE SAUDIS, AND THAT ITS BETTER TO HAVE THE SAUDIS SUPPORTING THE PEACE EFFORT THAN TO HAVE THEM AGAINST IT.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS KEEPING THE JORDANIANS OUT?
ATHERTON: I THINK KING HUSSEIN WOULD LIKE TO BE A LITTLE MORE CERTAIN OF THAT ITS GOING TO GO SOME PLACE.

QUESTION: ARE YOU AT ALL HOPEFUL--YOU MENTIONED RESOLV-ING THE PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE AND AN INTERPRETATION OF 242--THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL INDEED COME TO A SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE OF THEIR ATTITUDE TO ENABLE THINGS TO GO ANY FURTHER?

ATHERTON: THERE IS QUITE A DEBATE GOING ON ON BOTH OF THESE ISSUES INTERNALLY HERE TODAY. THEY ARE GOING TO BE DISCUSSED CLEARLY DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT AND I WOULD SIMPLY RATHER WAIT AND SEE AFTER THE TALKS IN WASHINGTON BEFORE I EVEN EXPRESS MYSELF AS HOPEFUL OR UNHOPEFUL.

QUESTION GARBLED

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ATHERTON: YES, I THINK THAT'S A FAIR INTERPRETATION FROM THE ISRAELI SIDE (THAT THEY MUST TAKE HARD DECISIONS ON THE PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE AND THE APPLICABILITY OF 242 ON ALL FRONTS). I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT I DON'T THINK THERE ARE ALSO VERY HARD DECISIONS FACING THE ARAB SIDE AS WELL.

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD THAT BE? YOU'RE TALKING NOW AND MENTIONING 242. IT'S OBVIOUSLY A REFERENCE TO THE ISRAELIS SO FAR AS WEST BANK AND PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE. WHICH ISSUES, AS FAR AS HARD DECISIONS IN GENERAL TERMS, WOULD YOU SAY THE EGYPTIANS FACE?

ATHERTON: WELL, YOU KNOW IT'S BEEN A LONG-HELD EYGPTIAN POSITION THAT THE RESOLUTION 242 CALLS FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN '67. IT'S ALSO CLEAR, IT SEEMS TO ME, THAT ONE IS NOT GOING TO GET AGREEMENT ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THE FINAL DETAILED BLUEPRINT OF A SETTLEMENT. HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER THIS OFFERS
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HIM ENOUGH OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO ENTER THE NEGOTIATIONS. SO WHEN I REFER TO HARD DECISIONS, I CLEARLY DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT I THINK ONLY ISRAEL HAS TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS. THERE ARE HARD DECISIONS FOR EVERYBODY CONCERNED. SEE CORRECTION PARA 5.

QUESTION: MR. ATHERTON, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE INTERIM PERIOD THAT YOU TALKED ABOUT. WHAT TIME FRAME ARE WE TALKING ABOUT, AND DO YOU HAVE IN MIND AN ARRANGEMENT WHERE THE PERIOD AFTER THE INTERIM PERIOD WOULD ALREADY BE SET DOWN IN ADVANCE?
ATHERTON: IT'S HARD TO GET TO SPECIFICS BECAUSE OUR VIEW IS THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN INTERIM PERIOD REALLY HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED, AND NOT LAID OUT IN ADVANCE BY ANY ONE PARTY, CERTAINLY NOT BY US. THERE IS A PROPOSAL ON THE TABLE. THE PRIME MINISTER PUT FORWARD A

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PROPOSAL FOR SELF-RULE, WITH A PROVISION FOR REVIEW AT THE END OF FIVE YEARS, FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. THAT IS A CONCRETE PROPOSAL FOR WHAT ONE COULD CALL AN INTERIM PERIOD. THE ARABS HAVE HAD DIFFICULTIES WITH SOME ASPECTS OF THAT. HOPEFULLY THEY WILL BEGIN TO EVOLVE SOME OF THEIR OWN THINKING ABOUT WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN DURING THIS PERIOD. CLEARLY IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT I THINK TO HAVE SOME UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WOULD COME AFTER THE INTERIM PERIOD OR AT LEAST THE OPTIONS OPEN AFTER THE INTERIM PERIOD. BUT TO SPELL OUT NOW IN DETAIL WHAT ALL THIS WOULD LOOK LIKE WOULD BE GETTING WAY OUT AHEAD OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS ITSELF.

QUESTION: THE FACT THAT YOU SAY YOU'RE EXPECTED TO BE BACK HERE FOLLOWING THE BEGIN VISIT IMPLIES THAT THERE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT CHANGE THEN IN ONE ATTITUDE OR ANOTHER FOR PROGRESS TO BE MADE IF NOT BY DIRECT
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NEGOTIATIONS IN THE COMMITTEES, THEN BY YOU AGAIN. IS THIS A FAIR ASSUMPTION?

ATHERTON: WELL, I THINK CHANGES USUALLY ARE ONLY MADE WHEN ONE IS IN A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS WHERE DECISIONS HAVE TO BE MADE. THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS I EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUITY IN THE PROCESS. MY COMING BACK IS TO HELP PROVIDE THAT CONTINUITY. I CAN'T PREDICT NOW WHETHER OR NOT, AND IF SO WHEN, AND WHAT THE NATURE OF CHANGES MAY BE, BUT THAT'S THE NATURE OF NEGOTIATIONS. YOU'RE PROBING ALL THE TIME TO SEE WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN FIND A WAY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF RECONCILING POSITIONS THAT UP TO NOW HAVE NOT BEEN RECONCILED.

QUESTION: BUT IS IT FAIR TO SAY THAT YOU'VE GONE AS FAR AS YOU CAN GO AT THIS POINT?

ATHERTON: NO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S FAIR TO SAY. I THINK THE REALITY IS THAT THE NEXT STEP IS CLEARLY GOING TO BE AT A SOMEWHAT HIGHER LEVEL WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER MEETS PRESIDENT CARTER. IT'S BEEN UNDERSTOOD FROM THE BEGINNING THAT I WOULD HAVE TO BREAK OFF AND GO BACK FOR THAT VISIT. IF THAT VISIT WEREN'T TAKING PLACE, I PRESUME I WOULD BE STAYING ON HERE. BUT THAT BECOMES THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS AND IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THE LAST STEP BY ANY MEANS--THE PROCESS WILL HAVE TO GO ON AFTER THE BEGIN VISIT JUST AS IT'S GONE ON BEFORE.

QUESTION: HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY ASSURANCES FROM THE

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ISRAELIS THAT THERE WILL BE NO NEW SETTLEMENTS AND NO
WORK ON EXISTING SETTLEMENTS WHILE THE TALKS ARE GOING
ON?

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ATHERTON: ALL WE KNOW AND ALL WE HAVE IS WHAT WAS
STATED IN THE DECISION OF THE CABINET A COUPLE OF WEEKS
AGO ON THE SETTLEMENTS QUESTION, NOTHING BEYOND THAT.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND ISRAELI INTERPRETATION
OF THAT STATEMENT? I MEAN OBVIOUSLY YOU ASKED HOW DID
THEY INTERPRET THAT STATEMENT?

ATHERTON: I RECALL THAT THERE WAS A VERY FULL PIECE IN
THE JERUSALEM POST RIGHT AFTER THE CABINET MEETING
WHICH EVERYONE TELLS ME WAS QUITE AN AUTHORITATIVE
INTERPRETATION. I DON'T THINK I COULD DISPUTE THAT AS
OUR UNDERSTANDING AND GO BEYOND IT.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. END TEXT.

5. CORRECTION PARA 7, PAGE 21: LINE 5 WHICH READS
"TO GET AGREEMENT ON A..." SHOULD READ AS FOLLOWS:
"TO GET ISRAELI AGREEMENT ON THAT INTERPRETATION AS
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A PRECONDITION FOR NEGOTIATIONS: THAT'S ONE. KING HUSSEIN FACES A HARD DECISION, ASSUMING THAT WE GET AGREEMENT ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES." PICK UP PARAGRAPH WITH LAST WORD ON LINE 5, "IT'S". SORENSON

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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON\'S PRESS BACK- GROUNDER IN JERUSALEM AND CAIRO
TAGS: OVIP, SOPN, SZ, EG, (ATHERTON, ALFRED LJR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0004d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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